



# The Council for Global Equality

Advancing an American Foreign Policy  
Inclusive of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

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## Transition Policies and Appointments

*Charting a New Foreign Policy  
Inclusive of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*

October 2008

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A new Presidential Administration can make a powerful beginning by taking action immediately to restore the credibility of America's global commitment to human rights and equality under the law. These twin pillars of American values have, of course, been eroded at home, through policy decisions taken (or avoided) by the current Administration. The erosion of those values also has contributed to a sharp decline in the world's respect for America and its foreign policies, and thus in America's influence abroad. This can and must be redressed.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) advocacy community in the United States has focused traditionally on domestic policy goals, some of which have foreign policy resonance, including long-delayed legislation to redress discrimination against LGBT citizens in employment, federal benefits, immigration, and military service. However, the new Administration also must be pressed to restore America's proud tradition of championing our national values of equality, fairness and respect for diversity abroad—and to make explicit that those values are equally the birthright of all LGBT individuals worldwide.

By supporting LGBT human rights concerns internationally, the U.S. government has the opportunity to send an important—and to many a startling—message about America's

renewed commitment to global diversity. If this message is framed within a broad commitment to human rights, not just a narrow (but important) commitment to LGBT concerns, America's support for international LGBT rights could also help signal a shift in U.S. foreign policy more generally. And it could eventually set the foundation for a new working relationship with the European Union and several Latin American countries that have taken the lead in recent years in pressing LGBT human rights concerns on the international stage.

This discussion paper offers a list of fifteen key policy steps that a new Administration could take to chart a new human rights agenda for all. Most of these policies could be implanted almost immediately by executive order, or simply through the personal leadership of the next Secretary of State. Even where Congressional action may be required to fully entrench these new policies, in all cases the next President and the next Secretary of State could take important intermediary steps to advance each policy objective, while simultaneously working with a new Congress to secure a more expansive or more permanent calibration of our policies and commitments in U.S. law.

This discussion paper also emphasizes that the inclusion of openly LGBT individuals and/or LGBT allies in visible, senior-level positions in the new Administration will contribute to the larger objectives of the fifteen policy priorities identified here. Thus the political appointment process is also highlighted within this policy framework, and this discussion paper outlines a number of key foreign affairs positions that should be considered in making qualified LGBT or LGBT-friendly appointments during the next Administration. We should move quickly to identify the right people with the right skills to be slotted for these positions.

Most but not all of the senior-level positions outlined in this paper are located within the State Department and carry significant authority in setting U.S. foreign policy, particularly within the context of our commitment to human rights abroad. Many also carry significant symbolic value; the Administration could send an important message about America's respect for diversity and inclusion simply by selecting a qualified LGBT candidate to represent our country in these high-level diplomatic positions.

## Fifteen Priority State Department Policy Steps with Immediate LGBT Impact

A new Administration should take immediate policy steps to (a) strengthen LGBT awareness, (b) advance equality goals within the foreign affairs agency community and broader government, and (c) strengthen core human rights protections and equality goals for LGBT individuals abroad. The following priorities also emphasize the importance of reclaiming our voice on human rights by advancing a bold U.S. human rights agenda—one that recognizes the inherent equality and fundamental dignity of all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The priorities listed below focus on U.S. diplomatic positions, embassy-level engagements, funding opportunities and departmental structures that would make U.S. leadership possible. There are, of course, many other important LGBT priorities that have foreign policy resonance, including with respect to U.S. immigration and refugee law, global health policy, and specific engagements with multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations (UN), Organization of American States (OAS), and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Council fully supports the broader array of LGBT-related proposals that have been put forward on many of these other more focused topics. The following proposals, by way of contrast, are directed instead at changing the mindset with which the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) approach international LGBT issues. If fully implemented, these steps would lend enormous support to progress on the full range of foreign policy issues that impact LGBT communities in the United States and abroad.

Each of the following fifteen steps could be announced, and in some cases implemented, within the first 90 days of a new Administration:

### Diplomatic Engagement

1. The United States has been surpassed by many countries, from Brazil to Germany, in its support for LGBT communities and equality goals abroad. **Seek a strategic partnership with key regional countries and, where possible, regional blocs (e.g., the European Union) and institutions (e.g., the UN Human Rights Council), aimed at fostering an LGBT-inclusive vision of America’s commitment to human rights.**
2. In over 100 countries worldwide, LGBT individuals have been subjected to arbitrary arrest, rape, legal discrimination or murder. **Carry out formal diplomatic approaches (“demarches”)—at Ambassadorial or, at minimum, Deputy Chief of Mission level—in countries where security forces are complicit**

in LGBT human rights abuse or in failing to investigate/punish such abuse, or where governments criminalize private homosexual activity between consenting adults.

3. Laws that discriminate against foreign LGBT citizens exist in many countries. Embassies could do more to urge their repeal or revision, in keeping with U.S. principles of equality and respect for diversity. **Strengthen Country Team efforts to encourage the repeal of LGBT-discriminatory laws in a select list of countries where American influence is strong and where LGBT discrimination is egregious.**

### Organizational

4. There is no office or position within the State Department that has formal responsibility for monitoring and responding to LGBT human rights and equality issues. **Create a formal position in Washington to work with select embassies and country teams to design and institute a new “protection agenda” that encourages consistent reporting and more constructive diplomatic responses to human rights abuses targeting LGBT communities.**

### Assistance

5. “Mission Strategic Plans”—the planning documents that guide the programs and activities of each U.S. embassy or consulate abroad—often do not address discrimination against LGBT communities. **Instruct embassies, as appropriate, to include in Mission Strategic Plans specific actions aimed at fighting LGBT discrimination, strengthening the capacity/focus of LGBT groups, and/or including those groups in civil society outreach.**
6. U.S. assistance programs aimed at strengthening democracy and civil society abroad should be inclusive of LGBT communities. **Designate a substantial USAID and/or State Department funding set-aside for programs aimed at enhancing LGBT equality abroad, principally in the context of funding devoted to civil society, democracy, and the rule of law.**
7. U.S. legal advice is offered to a number of countries seeking to reform their legal systems. **Instruct Department of Justice legal advisers in countries where warranted to advise host governments on legal protections of LGBT citizens.**
8. USAID micro-credit funding—intended to strengthen the entrepreneurial and small-enterprise sectors of foreign economies—is offered in many developing countries. **This aid has been targeted toward women, ethnic minorities, and individuals on the margins of society, but has not been directed toward LGBT communities. Ensure that USAID micro-credit funding, where part of Mission**

Strategic Plans, is advertised broadly within LGBT communities and considered as a tool to empower economically marginalized LGBT individuals.

### Corporate Engagement

9. Fair-minded U.S. companies, and the American Chambers of Commerce located in most foreign capitals, can play a powerful role in advancing LGBT equality goals in the workplace. **Begin a White House and State Department dialogue with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on the need for American companies to implement workplace policies in their overseas offices and manufacturing plants that reflect core American values, including respect for the rights of LGBT employees.**

### Travel and Immigration Rights for People with HIV / AIDS

10. The U.S. is one of only 13 countries barring entry to those with HIV and AIDS. If final administrative steps to remove this travel and immigration restriction have not yet been completed by the time of the Presidential transition, **the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should expedite the removal of HIV from the list of "communicable diseases of public health significance" that is used by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the United States Department of State (DOS) to prevent foreign nationals from obtaining non-immigrant visas and legal permanent residence.**

### Refugee and Immigration Support

11. The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), has responsibility within the State Department for formulating policies on population, refugees, and migration, and for administering refugee assistance and admissions programs. **Encourage foreign partners to offer refugee protections to those who flee persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity. In consultation with the UN, help meet immediate humanitarian needs and resettlement costs associated with LGBT refugee protection.**
12. Unlike most industrialized countries, the United States does not allow lesbian and gay Americans to sponsor their foreign-born permanent partners for immigration. **Support full immigration rights for same-sex binational couples, including the rights and obligations referenced by the last Congress in the Uniting American Families Act.**

### Management

13. We need to ensure that LGBT diplomats, who can serve as powerful role models in their foreign postings, remain in the Foreign Service. To ensure that they can do so, State Department personnel policies that discriminate against LGBT

employees must be redressed. (Not all of these State-specific policies are covered by the still-pending Domestic Partners Benefits and Obligations bill.) **Support efforts to ensure equal benefits for federal employees' domestic partners, including by addressing inequities unique to Foreign Service. Consult Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA) in the review process.**

- 14.** The U.S. could advance LGBT workplace equality substantially by applying equality principles to those private sector contractors that receive U.S. government funding. **Require that all U.S. government contractors and recipients of U.S. government funding similarly grant benefits to domestic partners.**

#### **Support an LGBT Domestic Agenda to Advance International Human Rights**

- 15.** To allow the United States to speak credibly on human rights abuses impacting LGBT communities internationally, **announce vigorous support for long-pending legislation intended to provide equal treatment to LGBT Americans and immigrants, including the enactment of an Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) inclusive of gender identity, the Domestic Partners Benefits and Obligations Act (DPBO), the Uniting American Families Act, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, and the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.'**

## Foreign Affairs Positions of Importance to the LGBT Community

Improved policies only represent half of the equation. To be effective, the policy commitments that emerge from a new Administration must be implemented by LGBT-sensitive leaders throughout the government. This places the next round of senior-level Presidential appointments to foreign affairs agencies in greater focus than ever before.

Every four years, Congress publishes a “Plum Book,” listing civil service leadership and support positions in the federal government that are open to non-competitive Presidential appointments. The 2004 Plum Book listed over 7,000 such positions, although only a fraction of those positions were actually filled by Presidential appointment. If past Presidential transitions are a guide, approximately two thousand positions will likely be filled through presidential appointments by the new Administration. The list includes federal agency heads and their close subordinates, policy executives, advisors, and thousands of aides who report to these senior officials.

Including openly LGBT individuals in visible, senior-level positions should be an important symbolic goal for our community. However, scoring open LGBT appointments is not, in and of itself, a sufficient goal. To achieve maximum impact, we need to:

- identify specific positions of direct relevance to LGBT policy and personnel goals, at home and abroad, and
- fill them with individuals who, regardless of their sexual orientation, have the right mix of knowledge and skills to enable substantive progress toward those policy and personnel goals.

This paper suggests **priority foreign policy-related positions** that we should seek to fill with LGBT individuals or allies in the new Administration. Before delving into the logic for these positions, several important caveats:

1. Our focus is on the State Department, which, as lead foreign affairs agency, bears responsibility for coordinating U.S. foreign policy. Most foreign affairs issues that are of concern to the LGBT community fall within its purview. However, a few positions in other foreign affairs agencies that bear substantially on LGBT policy matters are also noted here.

2. Most of the positions identified below are Washington-based, given that those tend to be policy-oriented by nature. We do include a limited number of overseas positions, however.
3. With respect to Washington-based positions, most suggestions are pegged at no lower than the Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) level—generally considered to be the lowest policy-setting position in the State Department.<sup>1</sup> To obtain a purer focus on issues of relevance to our community, we have identified positions only below the level of Deputy Secretary.
4. We do not address positions that typically are filled by career employees. These are of course critical to the successful implementation of policies that are decided upon at more senior levels. It will be important to ensure that fairness and equality goals are applied, with respect to personnel policies and programmatic goals, at every level.
5. Finally, we recognize that the senior-level appointment of any LGBT individual at this time in our nation’s history will carry symbolic value. However, as noted above, it is critically important to have the right person in the job. In all but the most symbolic cases, appointing an LGBT individual is far less important than is appointing someone who is (a) intellectually supportive of LGBT equality goals and (b) capable of creating change in bureaucracies that often resist change. For most of the positions identified below, we need advocates with strong communication skills, and with other leadership skills that can foster change agents within the State Department bureaucracy and allies among other interagency players. Within the State Department’s conservative and compartmented culture, there is an additional primacy of choosing someone who can work quietly behind the scenes rather than display showmanship, the latter being almost inevitably counterproductive to effective policy leadership.

With those caveats, following is a suggested list of priority positions in which qualified LGBT individuals or allies could make a difference on issues of importance to our community.

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<sup>1</sup> Each of the State Department’s approximately 32 bureaus has on average four deputy assistant secretaries (or DAS-equivalents) to coordinate bureau work and reduce management and policy oversight pressures on the bureau’s Assistant Secretary. Of those, one DAS position generally is politically appointed; the others are generally career positions.

# THE STATE DEPARTMENT

## High-Visibility Appointments with Direct LGBT Policy Impact

The **Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs (G)**<sup>2</sup> is in the top tier of policy-governing positions in the State Department, falling directly below the Secretary and Deputy Secretary. An appointment to this position will be hard to score, given both its level and the large number of interest groups (those concerned with environmental, maritime, science, population, refugee, and migration policy) that might be expected to compete for it in view of its impact on their interests. The Under Secretary represents our country at high-level international conferences and in domestic policy discussions on the above issues. This senior official generally is at the table in broader U.S. government decisions on positions to take in those fora. The person in this position has direct substantive oversight of the Department's reports on human rights, democracy, and human trafficking; the position also carries responsibility for vetting funding recommendations in those and other critical policy areas (e.g., population policy). An LGBT appointment to this position obviously would carry high symbolic impact.

The **Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL)** is one of 27 individuals who formally carry the title of assistant secretary. The person in this position reports to the Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs (see above). This position would be the highest Assistant Secretary-level appointment of direct relevance to policies affecting LGBT individuals around the world. More frequently than the Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs, the Assistant Secretary speaks on behalf of the U.S. at human rights-specific conferences and events; his/her narrower portfolio also signals more specific focus on human rights policy oversight and recommendations. For these reasons, an openly LGBT appointment to this position could carry higher symbolic and substantive impact. That said, for maximum impact, an LGBT appointment to this position would require an LGBT-friendly Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs, as the latter must vet the Assistant Secretary's speeches and approve any policy recommendations made by the bureau.

The **Assistant Secretary for International Organizations (IO)** similarly would be in a position to speak out in important fora on behalf of international LGBT concerns, and would play an important role in framing the U.S. agenda for UN committees. Like G, however, this position is involved in a wide sweep of issues that go beyond the human rights, diversity, and tolerance focus that the Assistant Secretary for DRL carries. An

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<sup>2</sup> Based on tradition within the State Department, each bureau is also identified here by its common abbreviation. State Department officials generally refer to these bureaus by their identifying letters in the State Department's organization chart.

alternative might be to seek an **LGBT appointment to the (political appointee) Deputy Assistant Secretary slot** in IO, in order to help keep an eye on resolutions and debates with impact on LGBT communities abroad.

The **Counselor** of the Department (C) carries a broad portfolio that changes from one administration to the next. He or she advises the Secretary on a broad range of issues of mutual interest or concern; in addition, s/he may be given oversight responsibilities for particular geographic or functional policies, as needed. There thus is potential for an LGBT individual or ally in this position to work on a wide range of policies, whether foreign or management, of concern to the LGBT community. Of note, the Secretary traditionally selects his or her Counselor personally, outside the normal White House appointments process.

The **Legal Advisor** (L) similarly advises on a wide and shifting range of policy issues, depending on needs of the moment. The current Legal Advisor's office has been particularly unhelpful in efforts to improve treatment of partners of LGBT Foreign Service officers. As L's views are frequently sought with regard to any legal (domestic or international) matter within the Department's purview, it will be critical to have an ally in this position.

### **Lower-Visibility Appointments with Longer-Term Potential Impact**

Though the position doesn't carry the Assistant Secretary title, the **Coordinator for International Informational Programs (IIP)** is considered Assistant Secretary-equivalent. The coordinator plans thematic programs for use in embassies, and has wide discretion as to the focus of those programs. An LGBT-supportive coordinator might, for example, mount: a series of speaker programs on diversity and tolerance as features and challenges in American life; a program on minority protections in democracies; or a speaker series on American family life, to include LGBT families. There are of course many other interesting avenues that could be explored.

Another position worth considering is that of the **Deputy Assistant Secretary** in the **Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)** who oversees **International Visitor and/or Citizen Exchange programs**. This DAS position can be career or political; however, each of the above-named exchange programs is overseen, at the office director level, by a career employee. Exchange programs vary from embassy to embassy. Each year, every embassy receives an agreed number of international visitor grants (IVs). Grantees, who are nominated and competitively selected by senior embassy officials, are host country citizens who generally are either of rising political/economic importance or active on issues of importance to specific American interests. These grantees travel individually or in small groups to the U.S. for a custom-designed program that focuses on their areas of expertise and influence. IV grant recipients are chosen on the basis of overall criteria set in Washington; their

backgrounds and areas of expertise tend to coincide with an embassy's program priorities (e.g., economic growth, strengthening civil society, tolerance/diversity/human rights, national security, etc.). Washington must approve the IV slate or ask for alternate candidates. Should an embassy fail to use its full IV grant quota, Washington can redirect them to other posts. Citizen exchange programs promote travel by normal citizens to interact with citizens of other countries; they may talk about their professions, regional differences in the U.S., ways of life, involvement in civic society, etc. Either of these programs would appear ripe for discussions of LGBT concerns.

### **Lower-Level Appointments of Oversight/Liaison Nature**

Under Secretaries have a limited number of advisory positions to fill in their offices. Usually these are filled primarily by relatively junior career officers who understand State's bureaucracy and the interagency process; some, however, often go to political appointees. **Once a new Secretary of State has chosen an Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs (G) and an Under Secretary for Management (M), we might seek a political appointee adviser in those two offices.** Having someone in G with whom to interact on policy issues affecting the LGBT community, and someone in M with whom to interact on personnel issues affecting LGBT employees (including not only issues steered by the Bureau of Human Resources, but also Foreign Service Institute training priorities), would be helpful. Of note, neither position should be expected to carry significant influence, unless the person selected were to have strong pull with the relevant Under Secretary through personal connections, trust relationships, or influence skills.

The **Bureau of Legislative Affairs** is filled with political appointees, generally with Hill experience. At more senior levels, these individuals serve as Assistant Secretary, DAS, or "senior adviser"; at more junior levels, they are known as Legislative Management Officers. Their function is to manage particular substantive portfolios, i.e., watch for legislation, resolutions and appropriations on specific issues, and coordinate State Department positions on those issues with the White House and other relevant agencies. Having LGBT (or LGBT-friendly) individuals in those positions with bearing on LGBT-related legislation (e.g., on immigration, or on the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations bill, each of which has State Department-specific nuances), and/or with bearing on funding that could be attributed to overseas LGBT groups, could be helpful.

### **High-Visibility Appointments with Symbolic Impact**

Having an LGBT person appointed as **Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (S/OCR)** would have clear symbolic impact and could be useful in any Capitol Hill push to expand Title VII's reach to cover sexual orientation and gender identity. That said, this is not a policy-

setting position (either on foreign policy concerns or in personnel policies) and thus probably would be of lesser interest.

An LGBT person appointed as **Global AIDS Coordinator (S/GAC)** similarly could carry symbolic impact. That said, the Coordinator is less a decision-maker than a policy manager, following whatever policy guidelines are set at the White House. (As an example, the fact that the current incumbent is gay has had no appreciable impact on the Bush Administration's exclusion of openly LGBT organizations from U.S.-funded HIV/AIDS programs.) This, too, might be a lower appointment priority.

### **Temporary, Honorary or External Positions**

Throughout the year, so-called "public delegates" are appointed by the White House to serve on U.S. delegations to a variety of short-duration conferences, including those examining specific expert-level topics within mandates of the United Nations (UN), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Organization of American States (OAS), and other multilateral organizations. In addition, the U.S. nominates technical experts and other appointees to serve on a variety of UN treaty body committees; any such person elected by that body would serve in a personal capacity within that organization. These tend to be less policy-influential than many of the positions described earlier, and thus would not be our highest priority. That said, there could be both symbolic and practical value for ensuring that LGBT individuals are considered for appropriate service on such delegations or committees.

### **Ambassadorial Positions**

The symbolic importance of nominating openly LGBT individuals as ambassadors is evident: not only are ambassadors high-visibility by nature, their status as personal representatives of the President can underscore the Administration's attachment to LGBT equality. Moreover, strong performances by such appointees can erode ongoing efforts by religious right organizations to deny these highly symbolic positions to LGBT men and women.

Although any such appointment(s) would be welcome, the symbolic and policy value of an LGBT appointment arguably would be strongest if to a country where gay, lesbian and transgender individuals have been targeted for violence, or where the social and legal climate affecting gays and lesbians is poor. If a country's legal climate bars homosexuality or criminalizes homosexual activity, seeking an openly LGBT appointment could be counterproductive as the appointee might be rejected by the receiving country through the ambassadorial *agreement* approval process. In those cases, it nonetheless will be important to ensure that a non-LGBT ambassador is LGBT-friendly and a strong

proponent of equality and civil rights, to help ensure that embassy programs are targeted toward those goals.

As U.S. policy in international fora tends to be set largely in Washington rather than in the field (with the notable exception of our UN Ambassador, who carries almost Cabinet-equal sway), ambassadorial appointments to international organizations may carry less programmatic influence than bilateral appointments.

## **OTHER AGENCIES**

Although the Department of State bears primary responsibility for coordinating U.S. foreign policy, several other agencies have programs of potential relevance to the gay community. Primary positions of interest include the following.

### **U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)**

USAID's **Assistant Administrator for Policy and Program Coordination** clearly is of key importance. The person in this position could integrate LGBT concerns and priorities into a range of assistance programs; s/he also could propose new LGBT-relevant programs should existing programs be deemed to lack sufficient flexibility for incorporating an LGBT objective.

In addition, we should seek to ensure that an LGBT or LGBT-supportive individual is included in the office that oversees the allocation of U.S. developmental assistance abroad. Over the last two years, this traditional USAID function has gravitated to a new State Department office known as the Office of Resources (F). To date, this new office has been headed by a political appointee who is double-hatted as USAID Administrator. According to many observers, this new office is still not entirely on its feet, and whether it will survive a change of administrations is not yet clear.

### **Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG)**

The BBG is separate from, but enjoys close cooperation with, the Department of State. It addresses policy and programmatic options for the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and targeted broadcasts toward Cuba and the Middle East. BBG programs rarely address LGBT issues, even within the context of cultural programming focusing on the diversity of the United States. Having an LGBT (or LGBT-friendly) individual appointed either as **Chair** or as one of eight **governors** could support broadcasting

reflective of America's policy priorities of tolerance, human rights protections, and LGBT-inclusive civil societies.

## **Department of Justice (DOJ)**

The Department is responsible for filling Legal Adviser positions in a number of embassies around the globe. Legal Advisers, who carry the diplomatic title "attaché," are assigned specific portfolios, which vary greatly from country to country. They work directly with counterparts at the host country Ministry of Justice to offer legal, prosecutorial, and constitutional reform advice, their goals being determined by the priorities set by the U.S. Ambassador and by Washington. With the right direction, legal advisers could tackle legal discrimination against gay, lesbian and transgendered foreign citizens, helping to rewrite discriminatory laws and regulations as a complement to embassy diversity awareness and human rights protections programs. We thus should seek to place an LGBT appointee into a **senior-level DOJ position that would afford policy oversight of legal adviser priorities.**

## **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)**

As currently structured, all DHS policy decisions flow north to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary—a leadership and management bottleneck that has reduced even senior policy officials to staff-level responsibilities. Assuming the new Administration rationalizes this dysfunction, a key position for us would be that of **Assistant Secretary for Immigration**—the level at which immigration policy recommendations logically should be framed.

The position of **Under Secretary for Policy**, at the next more senior level, might also be worth pursuing; however, given the breadth of responsibilities incumbent in that position, the incumbent reportedly is forced to focus inordinate amounts of time on bureaucratic meetings and coordination of squabbling fiefdoms more than playing a genuine policy role.

We should also consider pressing for establishment of a **blue-ribbon panel** to consider comprehensive immigration reform, which may be the only way to move LGBT-friendly immigration policies forward. Obviously, should such a commission be formed, an LGBT seat on the body would be crucial.

## **About the Council for Global Equality**

Launched in December 2007 as the LGBT Foreign Policy Project and renamed the *Council for Global Equality*, this effort brings together human rights activists, foreign policy experts, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) leaders, philanthropists, corporate interests and political strategists to encourage a clearer and stronger voice on human rights concerns impacting LGBT communities around the world.

The Council for Global Equality focuses on the plight of LGBT communities in often hostile environments abroad. Council members work to ensure that those who represent our country—in Congress, in the White House, in U.S. embassies and in U.S. corporations around the world—use the diplomatic, political and economic leverage available to them to oppose human rights abuses that are all too regularly directed against individuals because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Through this effort, the United States has the opportunity to join many European and Latin American countries that have now surpassed us in their international commitment to ending violence and discrimination against LGBT communities internationally. Public Interest Projects in New York serves as the Council's fiscal sponsor.